

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for providing a golf ball with an indication that its physical properties have been degraded due to the presence of water in the golf ball, comprising the steps of:  
providing a surface of a golf ball that indicates that the ball has been subjected to water for a time that affects the physical properties of the golf ball; and,  
covering the surface with a water-activated masking layer that is altered to permit viewing of the covered surface upon being subjected to water, thus to unmask the covered surface for indicating that the ball has been subjected to such an amount of water penetrating the ball that its physical properties have been affected thereby.
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the masking layer alteration includes changing the refractive index of the masking layer.
3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the masking layer alteration includes at least partial degradation of the masking layer.
4. The method of Claim 3, wherein the partial degradation includes at least a partial sloughing off of the masking layer.
5. The method of Claim 3, wherein the partial degradation includes microbial degradation.

6. The method of Claim 1, wherein the covered surface of the golf ball has a predetermined color, the exposing of which by the unmasking being the indication of degraded physical properties of the golf ball.
7. The method of Claim 1, wherein the covered surface carries indicia, the unmasking of which being the indication of degraded physical properties of the golf ball.
8. The method of Claim 7, wherein the indicia is printed on the covered surface.
9. The method of Claim 7, wherein the indicia is embedded in the covered surface.
10. The method of Claim 1, wherein the masking layer is at least partially dissolved by water.
11. The method of Claim 1, wherein the masking layer is at least partially removed in the presence of water.
12. The method of Claim 1, wherein the masking layer functions as an opacification layer in which the masking layer has a structure which makes the masking layer opaque.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein the masking layer is made at least partially transparent upon water activation, thus to expose the covered surface.

14. The method of Claim 1, wherein the masking layer includes a water-activated binder.

15. The method of Claim 14, wherein the binder includes insoluble pigment particles.

16. The method of Claim 14, wherein the binder includes bubbles.

17. The method of Claim 14, wherein the binder includes voids.

18. The method of Claim 14, wherein the binder includes oils.

19. The method of Claim 1, wherein the covering layer includes light-blocking media and wherein the unmasking includes agglomeration of the light-blocking media, thus to at least partially expose the covered surface.

20. The method of Claim 1, wherein the covering layer includes light-blocking media.

21. The method of Claim 20, wherein the light-blocking media includes pigment particles.

22. The method of Claim 20, wherein the light-blocking media includes a water-activated binder with bubbles therein.

23. The method of Claim 20, wherein the light-blocking media includes a water-activated binder with voids therein.

24. The method of Claim 20, wherein the light-blocking media includes a water-activated binder and droplets of oil therein.

25. The method of Claim 14, wherein the binder includes a water degradable polymer.

26. The method of Claim 25, wherein the water degradable polymer is selected from the group consisting of polylactic acid, polylactic - polyglycolic acid copolymers, polycaprolactam and polyanhydrides.

27. The method of Claim 25, wherein the water degradable polymer is selected from a group consisting of polymers having microbes embedded therein that multiply in the presence of water which acts as a nutrient for the microbes, thus to cause degradation of the water-degradable polymer.

28. The method of Claim 27, wherein the group consisting of polymers having microbes embedded therein includes polysaccharides, polypeptides, polyvinylalcohols, polyacrylic acids, and polyesters.

29. The method of Claim 14, wherein the binder is water swellable.

30. The method of Claim 29, wherein the water swellable binder is selected from a group of polymers consisting of polyvinyl alcohol, polyacrylic acid and polyethylenimine.